

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA Number: AZ-040-2005-0006

Case File No.: Grazing Allotment 5150

Applicant: Ryder Ranch

BLM Office: Safford Field Office

Project # 5638

Location of Proposed Action: T15S R31E Sec. 3,8,9,10,16,21,22

EA Team Leader: John Whitmer

Conformance with Applicable Land Use Plan

This proposed action is subject to the following land use plan:

Name of Plan: Safford District RMP

Date Approved: 9/1992, 7/1994

This proposed action is in conformance with the applicable land use plan:

CHECK ONE

☒ Yes

☐ No

Purpose/Need for Proposed Action

The allotment is in the process of having a coordinated resource management plan through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, AZ State Land Department, AZ Game and Fish Dept., The Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. The Natural Resources Conservation Service is the lead agency. The purpose for this project is to improve livestock distribution. To accomplish this objective, the allottee needs to construct permanent waters on the ranch, and divide the ranch into four pastures with new fencing.

Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives

Proposed Action: A total of 4 pipelines would be constructed or replaced on the Whitetail Allotment (See Map): and 40,500 ft of new 4- wire fencing to split the allotment into four pastures. A cattle guard will be placed across the Portal road. Three new 5,000 gallon storages and 5 new 1,000 gallon troughs are to be placed along the pipeline routes. The storage tank will be painted to match the surrounding area. The design and construction will be under the direction of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, using their fence and pipeline standards. This proposed action would provide needed livestock water and yearlong water for wildlife and improved the livestock distribution on the allotment.

Pipeline # 1, (New Pipeline), a 1 1/4 inch plastic pipeline, would be ripped along the east side of the existing road south from Sec. 16 through Sec. 21. This pipeline would run southwest for about, 1 1/4 miles through sections 16 and 21, and then south through state land for about a mile. (7,900 ft) see map.

Pipeline # 2, a 1 1/4 inch plastic pipeline, would be ripped in following the existing pipeline, running northwest from the ranch headquarters, through sections 15, 9 (10,000 ft). see map.

Pipeline # 3, a 1 1/4 inch plastic pipeline would be ripped in following the existing pipeline to the north from the ranch headquarters through Sec. 15, 10 (10,000 ft) see map.

Pipeline # 4, a 1 1/4 inch plastic pipeline, would be ripped in following the existing pipeline to the south from the ranch headquarters through Sec. 22 (5,000 ft) see map.

Fence # 1, (13,500 ft.) will be built east to west through Sec. 15, 16. see map.

Fence # 2, (27,000 ft) will be built north to south on the west side of the Portal road. Sec. 3, 10, 15, 22, 28. see map.

No new roads would be built.

Maintenance may be by foot, horse back, or 4 wheeler. Where the pipeline is ripped along the existing road, maintenance may be done by truck. Old existing pipeline and troughs lying on top of the ground will be removed along with all left over scraps and debris. The disturbance from ripping in the pipelines will be leveled to the natural contour of the land. During the construction of the fence and pipelines all paniculate agaves and columnar cacti will be avoided, if for some reason an individual can not be avoided, that cacti will be transplanted to another location within the immediate vicinity.

Alternative A - Haul Water: Water would be hauled and made available to livestock on a temporary basis.

No Action Alternative - Do not lay the pipelines: The permittee would not construct additional pipelines to supply water for livestock.

Environmental Impacts

Scoping/Screening Session: Date: October 26, 2004, November 9, 2004

Issues Identified in Scoping: No cultural sites were located on public lands. The allotment is considered foraging habitat for the Lesser Long –Nosed bat. The Jaguar could frequent the area. No major issues were identified in the scoping process.

<u>Critical Element:</u>	<u>Affected</u>		<u>Critical Element:</u>	<u>Affected</u>	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
	(check)			(check)	
Air Quality	—	<u>x</u>	T&E An. Species	—	<u>x</u>
ACECs	—	<u>x</u>	T&E Plant Species	—	<u>x</u>
Cultural Resources	—	<u>x</u>	VRM	—	<u>x</u>
Flood Plains	—	<u>x</u>	Water Quality	—	<u>x</u>
Hazardous Materials	—	<u>x</u>	Wetlands/Riparian	—	<u>x</u>
Nat. Amer. Rel.	—	<u>x</u>	Wild & Scenic River	—	<u>x</u>
Prime/Unique frmlnd	—	<u>x</u>	Wilderness	—	<u>x</u>
Solid Waste	—	<u>x</u>	Noxious/Invasive		
Environ. Justice	—	<u>x</u>	plants	—	<u>x</u>
Other	—	<u>x</u>			

Description of Impacts

Proposed Action: Pipeline # 1 would be ripped in using a dozer along an existing road for the most part. The width of the disturbed area would be approximately 25 feet. There would be about 10,000 sq ft of disturbance for the storage tank and 2,500 sq ft for the water trough. The total land area that would be disturbed is approximately 210,000 square feet.

Pipeline # 2 would be ripped in using a dozer and following the existing pipeline. The width of the disturbed area would be approximately 25 feet. The total land area that would be disturbed is approximately 250,000 sq ft. A new trough will replace the existing trough.

Pipeline # 3 would be ripped in using a dozer and following the existing pipeline. The width of the disturbed area would be approximately 25 feet. The total land area that would be disturbed is approximately 250,000 sq ft. A new trough will replace the existing trough.

Pipeline # 4 would be ripped in using a dozer and following the existing pipeline. The width of the disturbed area would be approximately 25 feet. The total land area that would be disturbed is approximately 125,000 sq ft. A new trough will replace the existing trough.

Fence # 1, the fence line (13,000 ft) would be cleared by a dozer, The width of the disturbed area

would be approximately 25 feet. A cattle guard will be placed across the Portal road. The total land area that would be disturbed is approximately 337,500 sq ft.

Fence #2, The fence would be constructed along the Portal road within the road disturbed area. (27,000 ft)

Vegetation throughout the project area that would be disturbed is creosote bush, tobosa grass, mesquite, and catclaw acacia, snake weed, burro weed, and yucca. During the construction of the fence and pipelines all paniculate agaves and columnar cacti will be avoided, if for some reason an individual can not be avoided, that cacti will be transplanted to another location within the immediate vicinity. Furthermore, it is required that at least two (2) weeks prior to the construction of the fence, a wildlife biologist from the Safford Field Office be notified so that all cacti in question within the footprint of the construction project may be inventoried. The construction of the fences and pipelines will not affect the Jaguar.

Year long water will be available for wildlife, livestock distribution will improve.

Maintenance would be by foot or horse back or 4 wheeler or by truck where the pipeline would be ripped along the existing road.

No roads would be built.

Alternative A - Haul Water: No new impacts would occur. The rancher would haul water and it would not be cost efficient. Therefore livestock distribution would not improve and management goals would not be met. This is not a viable alternative. Under this alternative, no cultural sites would be impacted.

No Action Alternative - Do not install pipelines: No new impacts would occur. Under this alternative livestock distribution would not improve, water would be in short supply on the allotment. Wildlife would not have year long water. Therefore livestock distribution would not improve and management goals would not be met. This is not a viable alternative. No cultural resources would be affected.

Cumulative Impacts

Proposed Action: There would be disturbances while ripping in these pipelines, and clearing the fence line. The benefits of improving livestock distribution are greater than these disturbances. Vegetation along the pipelines and fence would reestablish within a few years. Existing old pipelines and troughs which lie on the ground surface will be removed, and all left over scraps and debris be removed. After ripping in the pipelines the area of disturbance will be leveled to the natural contour of the land. During the construction of the fence and pipelines all paniculate agaves and columnar cacti will be avoided, if for some reason an individual can not be avoided, that cacti will be transplanted to another location within the immediate vicinity. There are no other planned range improvements over the next five years that would result in cumulative

impacts.

Alternative A: There are no cumulative impacts under this alternative except an economic burden. The allottee would suffer an economic hardship to haul water on a long-term basis..

No Action Alternative: There are no cumulative impacts under this alternative.

Mitigating Measures and Residual Impacts

The new pipe will be ripped in following the existing lines on pipelines 2, 3, and 4. The storage tank would be painted to match the surrounding area. The disturbance will avoid all paniculate agaves and columnar cacti. If for some reason an individual can not be avoided, that cacti will be transplanted to another location within the immediate vicinity. Furthermore, it is required that at least two (2) weeks prior to the construction of the fence, a wildlife biologist from the Safford Field Office be notified so that all cacti in question within the footprint of the construction project may be inventoried.

Persons/Agencies Consulted

Natural Resources Conservation Service: Matt Roberts

Ranch Manager: Ernest Ryder

AZ State Land Department: Lyle Rolston

AZ Game and Fish Dept

Forest Service

Preparer(s): John Whitmer

Date: November 9, 2004

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/DECISION RECORD

I have reviewed this environmental assessment including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant impacts. I have determined that the proposed action with the mitigation described below will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required. I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the approved land use plan. It is my decision to implement the project with the mitigation measures identified below.

Mitigation Measures/Remarks:

The storage tank will be painted to match the surrounding area. During the construction of the fence and pipelines all paniculate agaves and columnar cacti will be avoided, if for some reason an individual can not be avoided, that cacti will be transplanted to another location within the immediate vicinity. Furthermore, it is required that at least two (2) weeks prior to the construction of the fence, a wildlife biologist from the Safford Field Office be notified so that all cacti in question within the footprint of the construction project may be inventoried.

/s/ Tom Schnell

02/08/05

Authorized Official

Date

Attachments:

Cultural and Paleontological Resource Stipulations

Purpose and Need of the proposed action

EA Number: AZ-040-2005-0006
Case File No.: Grazing Allotment 5150
Applicant: Ernest Ryder, Ryder Ranch
BLM Office: Safford Field Office

Location of Proposed Action: T15S R31E Sec. 3,8,9,10,16,21,22
(See Map)
EA Team Leader: John Whitmer

The purpose for this project is to provide a source of permanent water on the Whitetail allotment and divide the ranch into four pastures to improve livestock distribution. The design and funding will be through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, AZ Game and Fish Dept.,

The allotment is in the process of having a coordinated resource management plan through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, AZ State Land Department, AZ Game and Fish Dept., The Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. The Natural Resources Conservation Service is the lead agency. The purpose for this project is to provide permanent waters on the ranch, and divide the ranch into four pastures to improve livestock distribution. The pipeline from the ranch headquarters north west, and to the north and to the south will be replaced. A new pipeline to the south west will follow an existing road. All the pipelines will be ripped in. Troughs and storages will be replaced along the existing lines where needed. A water storage and trough will be placed along the new proposed line.

Re: EA # AZ-040-2005-0006
Grazing Allotment 5150 (Whitetail)

On January 7, 2005, I walked the area that was flagged for the fence-line/water pipe that is proposed to be put in on the Whitetail allotment. Upon completion of walking the entire flagged area it was determined that this area is foraging habitat for the Lesser Long-nosed Bat (*Leptonycteris sanborni*). Per the Biological Opinion for the Safford/Tucson Field Offices' Livestock Grazing Program, September 26, 1997, "Activities that adversely affect the density and productivity of paniculate agaves and saguaros may adversely affect populations of lesser long-nosed bats". Therefore, it is required that the disturbance in question avoid all paniculate agaves and columnar cacti. If for some reason an individual can not be avoided, that cacti will be transplanted to another location within the immediate vicinity. Furthermore, it is required that at least two (2) weeks prior to the construction of the fence, a wildlife biologist from the Safford Field Office be notified so that all cacti in question within the footprint of the construction project may be inventoried.

Additionally, in reference to the pipe line and fence, it is required that all left over scraps and debris be picked up so as to preserve the aesthetic nature of the landscape.

Finally, I would like the fence to meet BLM standards for best wildlife fence. This would mean that the bottom wire is smooth and 16 inches off the ground. If it is smooth, it could however go as low as 12 inches. If it is deemed that it has to be barbed then it is required to be 16 inches off the ground.